C!N

When ***Ghost Rider*** roars into comic shops next month, he'll be rriding a flaming motorcycle from hell in a return fueled by a scorching script from *Garth Ennis* and brought to life in ways never seen before by powerhouse illustrator Clayton Crain, who is determined to make this the hottest Ghost Rider ever!

Ghost Rider, a six-issue limited series, begins with Johnny Blaze paying a painful price for his deal with the Devil,: he's destined to ride the highways of Hell for all eternity. But an angel has an offer too good to refuse… an offer that may set Ghost Rider free. And the only thing he has to do is track down a rogue demon, Kazaan… but the job isn't as easy as it sounds.

The story is the sort of metaphysical motorcycle mayhem that Ghost Rider fans have come to expect—but it's the art that's going to wow fans. Crain is producing fully digital art for the book—not just for its eyecatching covers, but for every single panel of every single page of the six-issue series. And according to those who've seen early issues of the book, the result is a ***Ghost Rider*** unlike any you've ever seen before.

"This is classic horror adventure; Garth built a story that makes use of every page of the six-issue series—no decompressed storytelling here! Garth has a pretty good vision of what he wants, and he specifies everything in his script. When I break down his story, it works because he has obviously thought about it visually.

"Garth and I work well together; I see the story as he sees it. I might enhance some things, but there's nothing I'm doing that gets away from Garth's vision. It's important that an artist work with the writer; after all, he's getting paid to tell a story, and my job is to work with him to bring his vision to life artistically. It's been much more of a challenge, actually to figure out what the writer wants and to give it to him than it is to go off and do your own thing."

Clayton Crain:

Ghost Rider's 1-CC Powerhouse

Ghost Rider isn't Crain's first Marvel project—but many think it's the one that's going to put him on a lot of fan-fave lists. "I'd been working for Marvel, for a while; I had just finished ***Venom Vs. Carnage***, and I guess ***Ghost Rider*** had been coming up just about the time I was finishing," Crain told ***CSN***. "I was always interested in ***Ghost Rider***, because it's the sort of book that I enjoy personally: there's a little more supernatural in here than in the average Marvel book, with demons, skeletons—all the stuff that's fun to draw. The was a little darker than most Marvel stories, too; I think ***Ghost Rider*** is about as dark as titles get at Marvel, in fact, and I credit *Garth Ennis* with making that work."

Crain had first begun to experiment with digital art before he ever came to Marvel. "I hadn't worked for about six months before I got to work with Marvel. I started looking for work again because I wanted to draw, but I couldn't get any penciling work. So for about two months I started fully painting on the computer, having fun with that; three months later, I sent some of those files to Marvel and *Axel Alonso* loved the stuff, so he gave me cover work.

"Since I didn't have a job, I was doing all the digital work on an old PC that was crashing on me all the time. Once I started getting regular work, though, I splurged and bought a Mac—a dual 1.4 gHz with two gigs of RAM—and it's been great. The Mac has been awesome; it's rock solid and stable—it doesn't crash like the PC did. Now that I've worked on the Mac for a while, I'd never go back!"

Crain digital skills play an important part in creating the overall look of the limited series. "When I began working on ***Ghost Rider***, I built the bike in 3-D in much the same way, rendering it it out; then I could import the bike and draw on top of that. That's what saved me. I could take my sketch, bring it into ***Lightwave***, then maneuver the bike, add the lighting and at the right spots. In PhotoShop, I'd paint the reflective areas, set it all up, and render it out, and the end result was a bike that I could work with. This was a sort of high-tech approach to an art form that has, for the most part, remained pretty low-tech for decades."

While Crain is very pleased with the results he gets by utilizing Lightwave and Photoshop, he points out that this isn't a time-saving method of producing comic art. "Doing the full illustration digitally can be as time-consuming as penciling and inking, although Lightwave saves me some time. The bike is there in 3-D, but I still have to do prep work to get it set up properly and then to make it work with the rest of the comics page. I start with a working file, with a layer called thumbnail done at the same size as the finished digital file would be.

"I sketch it into the computer using a Wacom tablet [a flat, pressure-sensitive tablet that allows you to draw using a digital pen rather than a mouse] and then I put it in the right format for Marvel and they approve it. I'd never be able to do all of this without that Wacom tablet; if I had to work with a standard mouse, or draw it on paper and scan it in, it would take forever.

"Once I get approval, I open that same file and start drawing and painting, using multiple layers and flattening them as I go. It ends up with a huge file that has everything there; there are no separate colors, because the digital file blends the linework, the colors, the lighting effects, and everything in one master file."

It's an all too common complaint that some modern comics creators lack a work ethic—but no one can accuse Crain of being a slacker! "I work pretty much all day," he explained. "I start around 8:30 or so, taking breaks during the day, and I usually finish work around two in the morning. My imagination tells me that I can do six pages a week; so I try for that—but at the end of the week I'm pushing three! I've been able to do four pages a week sometimes, but it's been harder than I thought it would be. I get so involved in every panel !…

"I'm trying to work in full detail in every panel—backgrounds, foregrounds, main figures, everything," Crain said. "In fact, I'm having to back off a little bit because I've been working in so much in the backgrounds. I enjoy doing it, but the pages take fifteen hours to produce because of all the details I'm putting in!"

Of course, there's a learning curve involved with digital art. "When I look at the very first stuff that I did with ***Venom Vs. Carnage*** and compare it to this work I'm doing now… it's amazing how much better I am already! And I continue to see improvement in my work: ***Ghost Rider #2*** is a huge leap forward from ***Ghost Rider #1***, and ***Ghost Rider #3*** is a step forward from ***Ghost Rider #2***. I'm learning short cuts and getting more efficient, but I'm not producing pages that much faster than before because I'm also trying to take my work forward. I'm more attuned to color and contrast now, and I put more conscious effort into constructing a page in terms of color than I did just a few months ago. When I started doing the painting, I never thought of the color work; now I'm putting more thought into color theory and as a result, I'm using color much more effectively. And I can tell you that I'm suddenly *much* more appreciative of what colorists are doing! I spend a lot of time studying what they've done and trying to figure out how to make it work with my art."

Crain also has become much more aware of the limitations of the printing process itself. "You can get everything just perfect on the screen, but you won't know how some of the stuff will turn out until you actually see it printed. I look at the work after it's printed and realize that some things just don't work; dark scenes are a particular problem, because the artwork tends to darken up even more after it's printed.

"I'm also learning little things I can do to give digital art a sharper, more hand-rendered look. I'm using PhotoShop and then it saving flattened files and working with them a little bit more before I send Marvel the CMYK files. I sharpen them all before I send them in, because I discovered with ***Venom Vs. Carnage*** that the printing process softens that image, makes it fuzz up a bit. As I'm going along through the books, I'll try different things, then I'll look at the printed comic to see what worked and what didn't. It's a trial-and-error process to a degree. When I get the book, that's the first time I've seen it in printed form—I don't get any printed proofs—so I have learn by doing, then waiting a few months for the printed product, then adjusting from there."

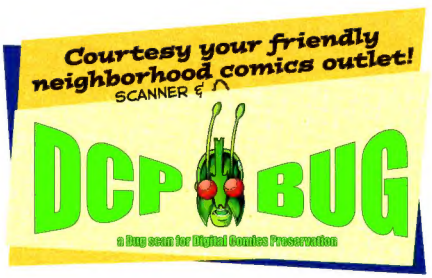
Why does he put so much effort into each page of the book? Simple: he doesn't want modern readers to experience the sense of disappointment he sometimes found in comics. "In the 1990's, when I saw a painted cover, I just *knew* the inside wouldn't be as awesome—and I was usually right! I want people to realize that when they see the digitally painted front cover from me, the inside will be of the same caliber and the same style.

"I treat the cover like one big panel of the entire story, and I give each interior page the same level of attention. In fact, while I might pay a little more attention to the dramatic composition of a cover image, I actually put a *lot* more time into the interior work."

It's that desire to deliver a whole-comic experience that motivates Crain artistically. "I enjoy doing the interior work; I want to tell a story visually; that's why I want to do comic books! I don't get the same enjoyment from doing covers; you're not really telling a story there. Covers are demanding in their own way, of course; but interior art forces you to think more visually, to compose the page to flow from panel to panel in order to tell the story. That's what got me into comics to start with!"

Ghost Rider #1, a $2.99 comic, is scheduled for September 8th release.

by Cliff Biggers



The following comics and comics-related books are tentatively slated for release on the dates given; if no date is given, the books are tentatively scheduled for release sometime in the month of September. It's very common for items to be delayed for a variety of reasons, so none of these dates are guaranteed. For the latest information on shipping and publishing delays, talk to the friendly folks at the comic shop where you got this issue of CSN! And yes, we are aware that some publishers regularly run an average of a month or so late on many of their titles—nevertheless, we go by the schedules they provide.

NOTE: At the request of many retailers, fans, and publishers, we have added Diamond Comic Distributors' code numbers after the publisher's name for each item; this will assist in placing special orders, etc.

1 WORLD MANGA VOL 1 TP 9/21 Viz AUG053316 $3.99
100 BULLETS #64 9/14 Vertigo/DC JUL050296 $2.75
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24 VOL 1 TP IDW JUL052956 $19.99
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Oversized slipcased edition includes Batman #608-619 as well as the the 2-page origin of Batman by Jeph Loeb & Jim Lee, along with a Jim Lee Sketchbook and issue-by-issue commentary by the creative team!
ABSOLUTE CRISIS ON INFINITE EARTHS HC TEAM SIGNED DF JUL052831 $499.99
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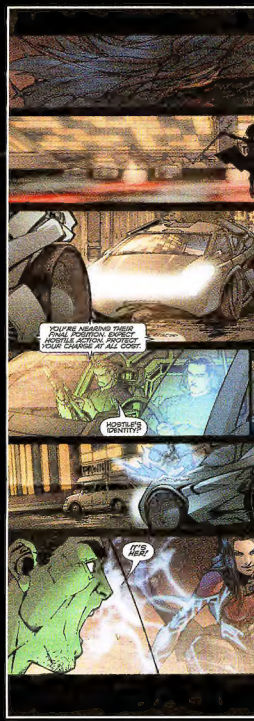
Artist Michael Gaydos returns just in time for the birth of Jessica Jones and Luke Cage's baby

SHE WAS ONE OF THE CODA'S GREATEST WARRIORS. NOW, ONLY THE WILDCATS CAN STOP HER!

BLADE 7, END RECONNAISSANCE AND RENDEZVOUS WITH CONVOY.
REPEAT, BLADE 7, RETURN TO CONVOY.
BLADE 7, RESPOND.
BLADE 7!
AFTER SEVERAL THOUSAND YEARS ON THIS PLANET, YOU'D THINK I MIGHT'VE LEARNED TO LIVE A LITTLE LESS DANGEROUSLY.



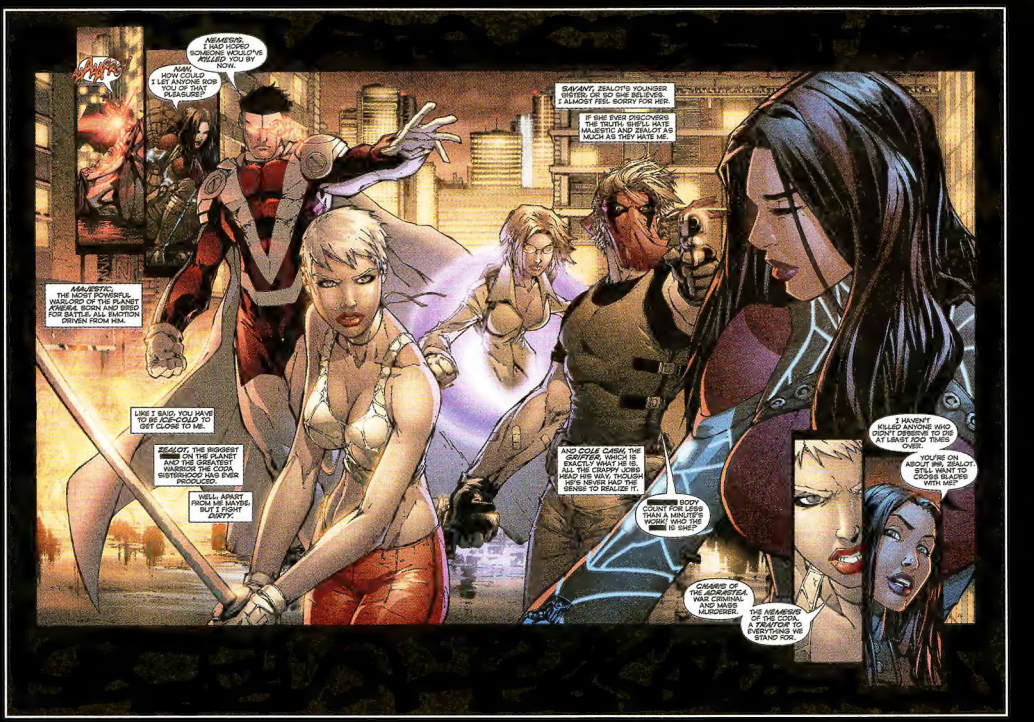
Zealot and her Coda sisters are the elite warrior-class on their homeworld of Khera, feared throughout the galaxy. A single name, however, strikes fear and hatred into their hearts: Nemesis!

Framed for the betrayal and slaughter of the Kheran military forces on Earth at the dawn of mankind, rogue warrior Charis Adrastea embarks on an epic quest to avenge the massacre, uncovering a conspiracy that threatens the entire universe. Hunted by friend and foe alike, she takes the name "Nemesis"—the Greek goddess of vengeance, whose myth she inspires. Now, as her blood-soaked quest nears its end, only the Wildcats can stop her!

Written by ROBBIE MORRISON

Featuring the stunning art of TALENT CALDWELL, HORACIO DOMINGUES AND MATT BANNING

NEW YORK CITY. NOW.
POWER! WHY IS LORD HELLSPAWN WITH THE ADVANCE GUARD HERE? HIS RIGHTS WERE TERMINATED WITHIN SECONDS!
ONLY ONE INDIVIDUAL WOULD DARE ATTACK A SQUAD OF OUR STRENGTH.


NEMESIS, I HAD HOPED SOMEONE WOULD'VE KILLED YOU BY NOW.
AWW, HOW COULD I LET ANYONE BOB YOU OF THAT PLEASURE?
SAVANT, ZEALOT'S YOUNGER SISTER, OR SO SHE BELIEVES. I ALMOST FEEL SORRY FOR HER.
IF SHE EVER DISCOVERS THE TRUTH, SHE'LL HATE MAJESTIC AND ZEALOT AS MUCH AS THEY HATE ME.
MAJESTIC. THE MOST POWERFUL WARLORD OF THE PLANET KREEGA, BORN AND BRED FOR BATTLE. ALL EMOTION DRIVEN FROM HIM.
LIKE I SAID, YOU HAVE TO BE ICE-COLD TO GET CLOSE TO ME.
ZEALOT, THE ROUGEST [redacted] ON THE PLANET AND THE GREATEST WARRIOR THE COSA SISTERHOOD HAS EVER PRODUCED.
WELL, APART FROM HE WHO'S, BUT I FIGHT DIRTY.
AND COLE CASH, THE GRIFTER, WHO IS EXACTLY WHAT I NEED TO GET CLOSE TO LORD HELLSPAWN AND HEAD HIS WAY. THOUGH HE'S NEVER HAD THE BALLS TO REALIZE IT.
I BODY COUNT FOR LESS THAN A MINUTE'S WORK! WHO THE HELL IS SHE?
CHAMPS OF THE ASCENDERS. WAS CRIMINAL AND MASS MURDERER.
THE NEMESIS OF THE COSA. A TRAITOR TO EVERYTHING WE STAND FOR.
I HAVEN'T KILLED ANYONE WHO DIDN'T DESERVE TO DIE AT LEAST 200 TIMES OVER.
YOU'RE ON ABOUT MR. ZEALOT. STILL WANT TO RIDE BLADES WITH ME?

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COSA NEMESIS

This miniseries plunges readers into the midst of the one-woman war Nemesis has been fighting for millennia. Each issue features a present-day sequence with art by Caldwell & Banning as she nears her quest's end, and a flashback with art by Domingues that reveals her origins and follows her vendetta as it spans human history!

A spectacular 9-issue miniseries
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Thanks to Jonah Jameson, anti-human sentiment hits an all-time high, endangering Peter Parker and his loved ones. Worse, just when matters couldn't get more perilous for the Parker family, the Green Goblin is unmasked—and the secret of his identity throws everyone's life into chaos!

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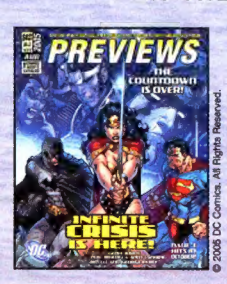

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Infinite Crisis #1 – The Countdown is Over! The DCU stands on the brink of a massive event... and you can bet that when writer Geoff Johns, artist Phil Jimenez, and company are finished, nothing will be the same!

Conan and the Demons of Khitai – King Conan battles monsters and shadow warriors in the Far East in this special story by Akira Yoshida and Paul Lee!

500+ pages of cool stuff that starts shipping in October!

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Infinite Crisis #1! The Countdown is over as the biggest event the DC Universe has seen in two decades explodes this October! Prepare for the dawn of the DCU's darkest day. courtesy of writer Geoff Johns and artist Phil Jimenez!

Fear Agent #1! Image Comics presents the first issue in a rollicking new series by Rick Remender and Tony (*The Walking Dead*) Moore, steeped in the sci-fi traditions of EC Comics!

Marvel Monsters: Fin Fang Four! Marvel celebrates "Marvel Monsters Month" with a quartet of title featuring covers by Eric (*The Goon*) Powell, including the hilarious **Fin Fang Four**, the story of four Marvel Monsters shrunken to human size and working for the FF's Reed Richards!

AND BE SURE NOT TO MISS:

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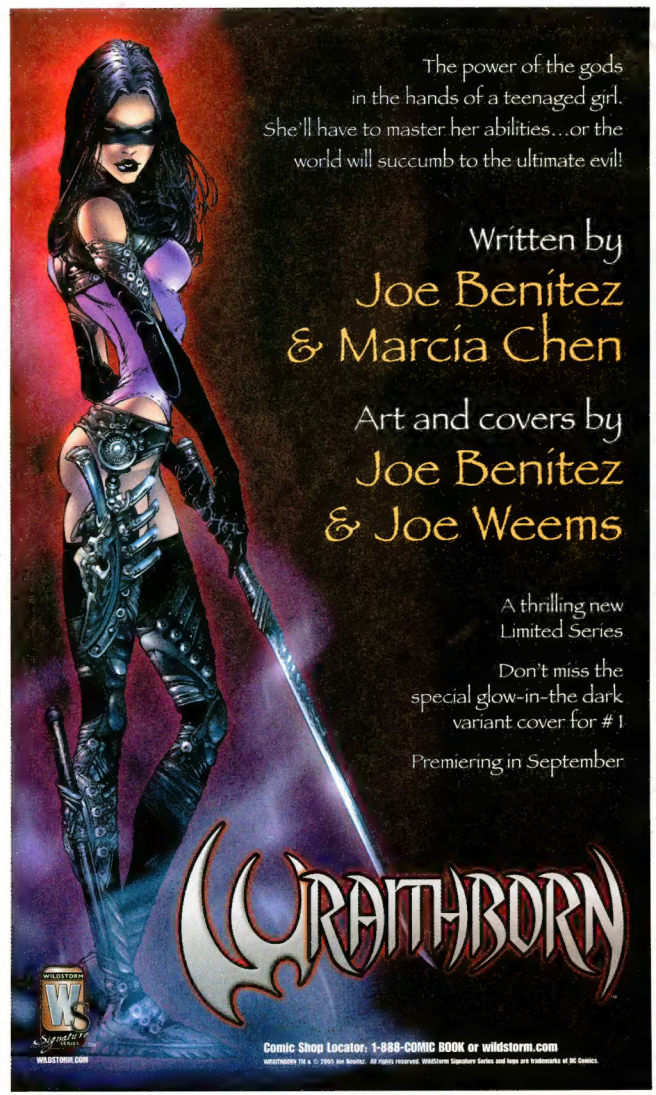
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